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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Demonstrations Against French  
Government Employment Policy Israeli Elections  
PARIS - Tuesday, March 28, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Demonstrations Against French Government Employment Policy  
Israeli Elections

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

As a result of today's strikes to protest PM Villepin's youth  
employment legislation (CPE) there are no paper deliveries.  
This report is based exclusively on Internet versions, except  
for afternoon paper Le Monde published yesterday.

Liberation leads with "March and Strike" but also announces on  
its front page: "Israel Votes Without Sharon" and reports that  
"Moussaoui Wanted to Attack the White House."

In its five-page coverage of the CPE situation, Liberation  
interviews a professor from the University of Toulouse who  
believes that Villepin's legislation "is a direct attack on  
France's Labor Code, which dictates all the employer/employee  
regulations. In a separate article Liberation is very critical  
of the speech given by Interior Minister Sarkozy in the north  
of France and titles its report: "Sarkozy Goes It Alone." In  
Le Figaro Alexis Bezet titles his editorial "There Is Life  
After the CPE" in reference to Sarkozy's speech. (See Part C)  
Le Monde's headline reads: "63% of the French Reject the CPE  
and the Villepin Method."

Liberation predicts that Sharon's Kadima party is the favorite  
in the elections in Israel. (See Part C)

Liberation carries an article entitled "Immigration Peoples  
the Streets in America." Pascal Riche reports on the 500,000  
Hispanic demonstrators who marched in L.A. against the new  
immigration legislation: "President Bush is at the center of  
the tempest. He could well lose the little authority he has  
left. He is opposed by the most conservative in his own party  
on the issue of legalizing immigrants. Last Thursday he called  
for the nation to 'align its rhetoric with its traditions and  
to avoid pitting one group against another.'" Le Monde  
reports: "Since the House of Representatives voted in December  
2005 a law that would criminalize housing or assisting an  
illegal immigrant and proposing the construction of a wall in  
four sections along the Mexican border, the mobilization has  
been intense. President Bush, who has lost control of his  
party on this issue, is proposing a formula of 'guest worker'  
which would lead to progressive regularization."

Liberation titles its article on Moussaoui: "A Kamikaze  
Defense" and notes the many inconsistencies of his testimony.  
"For weeks his defense team was making progress, but his  
testimony is bringing their house down. while some are calling  
Moussaoui's strategy "legally assisted suicide."

Le Monde reports on the "Controversy Surrounding a Raid on a  
Shiite Mosque in Iraq," noting the U.S. army had denied that  
its forces were responsible for Sunday's raid in which 16  
died. The Americans indicated the operation had been led by  
Iraqi Special Forces "to disrupt a terrorist cell." The U.S.  
nevertheless "recognized that some American Special Forces  
soldiers had been present, but as advisors, specifying that  
none of them had gone into the mosque and that the mosque  
hadn't been damaged."

Le Monde devotes a page to the "declassified Pentagon report  
on the Iraq invasion" under the headline "Saddam Was Counting  
on Paris and Moscow." It quotes the report's conclusions "that  
the strongman feared a coup but never believed in an American  
victory," and that "the most important element in Saddam's  
strategic calculation was his confidence in France and Russia.  
France and Russia had billions of dollars of contracts in  
Iraq, with an implicit counterpoint that their position would  
be favorable to the regime. And the French wanted to show the  
world their weight in the UN Security Council."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Demonstrations Against French Government Employment Policy

#### "Surreal"

Antoine de Gaudemar in left-of-center Liberation (03/28): "Two thirds of the people who are asked say they are against the CPE. Yet the government is not budging. While the country will be on strike, although the word itself has been avoided, the Prime Minister will be lunching with the King of Spain; the President remains deaf to the solemn calls for intervention. The only one speaking out is the Minister of the Interior, Sarkozy, who is thinking only of his political future, criticizes his own government's doings and makes no statement of solidarity. As for Villepin, his deafness will have once more disappointed youth about our nation's politicians. Unfortunately the collateral damage will go beyond Villepin and his personal political future."

#### "There Is Life After the CPE"

Alexis Bezet in right-of-center Le Figaro (03/28): "Sarkozy suggested that the legislation on the CPE be 'suspended.' Those who wanted a controversy to rise from Sarkozy's stance will have been disappointed. But as President of the UMP he reassured the party that 'there is life after the CPE.' Sarkozy does not want his presidential aspirations to suffer from the CPE controversy. But he cannot set himself apart from Villepin's government. Hence his calls for 'a compromise.' Sarkozy also strongly believes that France can reform, despite the message from the street, which in his view is more about the government's 'method' than the reform itself. Still, Sarkozy remains firm: union-held monopolies must end, as well as the single work contract. Sarkozy favors helping the unemployed find new jobs and supports pushing up the mandatory retirement age. His therapy methods are radical and courageous. Sarkozy's stance is that to better reform tomorrow, the government must give in a little today on the CPE."

#### Israeli Elections

##### "Separation"

Pierre Haski in left-of-center Liberation (03/28): "The Israeli elections will coincide with the elections to invest the Palestinian Parliament. In a not so distant time, these two elections would be taking place in a climate of tension and violence, considering how extremely contradictory are the options at hand. Yet this is not the case: the Islamic success has hardly affected the political debate in Israel. And all reports indicate that the Palestinian voters did not chose Hamas for its anti-Israeli agenda, but rather to put an end to years of corruption, nepotism and incompetence. This relative and reciprocal indifference does not a policy make, and will not suffice to ensure peaceful coexistence between the two neighbors. But it does make it possible to move towards a more dispassionate and real separation wished for by a majority on both sides. Sharon's most important political legacy is undoubtedly to have instilled the notion of unilateral withdrawal in the minds of the Israeli people. A large majority of Israelis have already turned their backs on the occupied territories and rid the Palestinians from their minds. Withdrawing from the West Bank as per the Olmert plan and in keeping with Israel's security interests will accentuate this trend. But it would be illusory to imagine that a durable peace can exist without an agreement: this is what has not been clearly spelled out in the program set out by Olmert, the probable winner of the Israeli elections, assuredly because it is the most difficult part of the program."

##### "Kadima, an Unlikely Winner"

Jacques Guyon in regional La Charente Libre (03/28): "If the last polls have it right, Olmert will be the winner. This outcome may appear surprising: after all Kadima is a recent party made up of an improbable amalgamation of disenchanted Likud and Labor followers. It is a party without deep traditional and historical roots created by Sharon, who went into a coma weeks after creating the party. Olmert's probable victory is also puzzling because he is such a new political figure who was destined to remain in the shadows of Sharon's strong personality. But all these handicaps do not seem to have weighed in against much heavier issues. Many among the pacifists, starting with Peres, have accepted the notion that peace will not be the result of an agreement with the Palestinians, but the result of separation." STAPLETON